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EO 12065: GDS 3/3/87 (FRIEDMAN, TOWNSEND, B.) OR-P
TAGS: SHUM AR
SUBJECT: ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

REF: (A) STATE 045423; (B) BUENOS AIRES 1129

1. [REDACTED] ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY. THE USG'S PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE GOA'S HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN THE MOST CONTENTIOUS ELEMENT IN WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST CONTENTIOUS ISSUE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES -- THE GOA'S VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. OUR PUBLIC CENSURE WAS MORE BITTERLY RECEIVED HERE THAN ANY OF THE MATERIAL SANCTIONS WE APPLIED. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES THE ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT HAS NEVER BEEN AN ITEM OF CONTENTION BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. SINCE THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING OUR LAST TWO REPORTS CANNOT BE REPEATED, WE THINK THAT ANY FUTURE REPORTS WILL PROBABLY IRRITATE OUR RELATIONS. MORE BROADLY, OUR CONTINUING CRITICISM OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD HERE DID NOT CHANGE THE GOA'S DECISION TO USE DISAPPEARANCE AS ITS PRIMARY ANTI-TERRORISM WEAPON. IN OTHER AREAS -- PRISON

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CONDITIONS, NUMBERS OF PEN PRISONERS -- IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BE CATEGORICAL. THE CUMULATIVE WEIGHT OF INTERNATIONAL

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny
Exemption(s):
Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full
☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to
Date ☐ Declassify on ☐ Reason

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OPINION, INCLUDING A MARGINAL CONTRIBUTION PROVIDED BY OUR REPORT, MAY HAVE INFLUENCED THE GOA POSITIVELY. UNDOUBTEDLY, THE RESENTMENT OF GOA POLICYMAKERS OVER OUR PUBLIC HECTORING WAS REFLECTED IN OTHER AREAS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP. END SUMMARY.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS WERE THE VERY CENTER OF US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS, SHADOWING AND SHAPING ALL OTHER INTERESTS. IN PURSUIT OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS GOALS, THE USG USED SEVERAL INSTRUMENTS -- THE DENIAL OF US MILITARY SUPPLY AND TRAINING, BRIEF SUSPENSION OF EX-IM FUNDS, VOTES IN INTERNATIONAL FORA, AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY. OF THE SANCTIONS, THE LAST, PUBLIC CRITICISM BY US GOVERNMENT, MOST DISTURBED THE GOA AND MOST AGITATED OUR OFFICIAL RELATIONS.

4. THE MOST VISIBLE ELEMENT IN OUR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY HAS BEEN THE ANNUAL HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS, OF WHICH THERE ARE ONLY TWO -- FOR 1979 AND 1980 -- ON ARGENTINA. LOGICALLY, THESE REPORTS ALSO SHOULD HAVE GENERATED MAJOR CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. ODDLY, THEY DID NOT, BECAUSE OF VERY UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THEIR PUBLICATION. IN 1980 AND 1981 THE GOA DELIVERED TWO STIFF NOTES PROTESTING THE PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT. BUT THE PROTESTS WERE DELIVERED WITH AN ORAL MESSAGE THAT THE GOA WAS MAKING A STRICTLY PRO FORMA GESTURE. PRO FORMA THIS YEAR BECAUSE THE LATEST REPORT WAS PERCEIVED BY THE GOA TO BE THE LAST SHOT BY THE OUTGOING CARTER ADMINISTRATION (SEE REF B FOR GOA REACTION). PRO FORMA LAST YEAR BECAUSE THE GOA WAS PLEASED WITH THE REPORT. IN FACT, THE GOVERNMENT TRANS-

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LATED THE FULL TEXT OF THE REPORT AND HAD IT PUBLISHED IN EVERY MAJOR NEWSPAPER. THIS ODD BEHAVIOR -- A GOVERNMENT PRESENTING TO ITS PUBLIC A REPORT THAT ACCUSED IT AND ITS AGENTS OF MURDERING AND TORTURING ITS CITIZENS -- IS EXPLICABLE ON TWO ACCOUNTS:

-- FIRST, OUR REPORT, FOR ALL ITS CRITICISMS, ALSO DOCUMENTED THE PROGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN ARGENTINA AND PRESENTED THE ISSUE IN A BALANCED MANNER, THUS ATTENUATING ARGENTINA'S POISONOUS IMAGE ABROAD.
-- SECONDLY, THE GOA WAS AWAITING THE PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT ON ARGENTINA OF THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION WHICH IT KNEW WOULD HAVE NONE OF THE

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BALANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT'S REPORT. THUS, OUR
REPORT WAS A PLEASING CONTRAST FOR THE GOA AND ONE IT
WANTED ITS PUBLIC TO SEE.

5. IF WE CONTINUE TO PUBLISH SUCH REPORTS, LOGIC
SHOULD REASSERT ITSELF. FUTURE REPORTS WILL BE AN
IRRITANT IN OUR RELATIONS. SUCH A REPORT WOULD DISTURB
THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE, INEVITABLY, IT WOULD DESCRIBE
A LESS THAN PERFECT HUMAN RIGHTS PICTURE. IF THE
GOVERNMENT WISHED, IT COULD ENLIST PUBLIC SUPPORT IN
THIS MATTER SINCE MOST ARGENTINES ARE PROUD NATIONALISTS --
THE PRO FORMA PROTESTS OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS WERE MADE
TO APPEASE THIS SENTIMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, OUR HUMAN
RIGHTS REPORTS WERE NATURALLY WELL RECEIVED BY LOCAL
HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND ACTIVISTS. THEY WERE
HEARTENED THAT THE USG WOULD DOCUMENT THEIR CASE AGAINST
THE ARGENTINE MILITARY SO VISIBLY AND SO EXTENSIVELY.

6. ANY ATTEMPT TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE
ANNUAL REPORT AS A TOOL IN INFLUENCING THE WAY THE GOA
TREATS ITS CITIZENS IS HIGHLY SPECULATIVE, AND RELATES,
ULTIMATELY, TO THE BROADER QUESTION OF HOW EFFECTIVE
OUR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY HAS BEEN. WE CAN STATE WITH A

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GOOD DEAL OF CERTAINTY THAT NEITHER THE REPORTS NOR OUR

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PUBLIC DIPLOMACY INFLUENCED THE GOVERNMENT'S USE OF DISAPPEARANCES (A EUPHEMISM FOR DETENTION, TORTURE AND ULTIMATE EXECUTION WITHOUT TRIAL) TO ELIMINATE REAL AND SUSPECTED TERRORISTS. DISAPPEARANCES HAVE DROPPED OFF CRASTICALLY IN RECENT YEARS PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE THE SECURITY FORCES SO SUCCESSFULLY LIQUIDATED THE TERRORIST MOVEMENT WITHIN ARGENTINA. AND EVEN TODAY SHOULD TERRORISTS TRY TO START UP WITHIN ARGENTINA, THEY WOULD, LIKE THEIR PREDECESSORS, "DISAPPEAR" IF CAPTURED.

7. IN OTHER VIOLATIONS -- JAIL CONDITIONS, DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL OR CHARGE - IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BE CATEGORICAL ON THE EFFECTS OF STRONG INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM, INCLUDING THAT OF THE USG. JAIL CONDITIONS HAVE IMPROVED, THE NUMBERS OF PRISONERS DETAINED WITHOUT CHARGES HAVE BEEN REDUCED. IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT BECAUSE THE GOA'S LEADERS WANT SO BADLY TO BE RESPECTED MEMBERS OF THE WEST -- TO CLEAN UP THEIR INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION -- THEY WERE STIMULATED BY FOREIGN CRITICISM TO REDUCE VIOLATIONS HERE. THERE IS SOME VERY CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE OF THIS, E.G. THE WAY THE GOA MOVED LAST YEAR TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF PEN PRISONERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, RELATIVE MODERATES WITHIN THE GOA HAVE OFTEN TOLD US THAT OUR PUBLIC CRITICISM ONLY MADE THEIR TASK MORE DIFFICULT AS THEY WRESTLED WITH THE HARDLINERS. THOUGH SELF-SERVING, THAT ARGUMENT TOO SEEMS TO HAVE SOME VALIDITY SINCE THE HARDLINERS, UNLIKE THE MODERATES, HAVE LITTLE REGARD FOR INTERNATIONAL OPINION. IN ANY CASE, IF THE GOA DID RESPOND TO INTERNATIONAL OPINION POSITIVELY, OUR REPORT WAS HARDLY DECISIVE IN SHAPING THE GOA'S DECISION.

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8. FINALLY, IN ARGENTINA, AS IN ALL OF LATIN AMERICA, WHAT GOOD THESE REPORTS MANY HAVE DONE WAS PROBABLY BEEN MORE THAN OFFSET BY THE DAMAGE THEY HAVE DONE TO OUR LONG-TERM EFFORT TO ESTABLISH MORE MATURE AND MUTUALLY-RESPECTFUL RELATIONS WITH THESE COUNTRIES. THE YEARLY REPORT CARDS CARRY WITH THEM THAT UNMISTAKEABLE AURA OF SANCTIMONIOUS PATERNALISM THAT THE LATIN AMERICANS SO READILY SENSE FROM THEIR LONG YEARS OF DEALING WITH US. THE ARGENTINE MILITARY CAN BE SAID TO HAVE EARNED THE OPPROBRIUM WE HEAPED UPON THEM. BUT MOST ARGENTINES -- AND MOST LATIN AMERICANS -- MUST RESENT THE FACT THAT ONCE AGAIN WE ARE OFFERING

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OURSELVES AS THE FINAL JUDGES OF THEIR SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT.
SHLAUDEMAN

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